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DE RUEHCV #0293 0641906  
ZNY SSSSS ZZH  
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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0727  
INFO RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY

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S E C R E T CARACAS 000293

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/30/2018  
TAGS: [MCAP](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [VE](#) [CO](#)  
SUBJECT: MINIMAL BRV ARMED FORCES RESPONSE TO DEPLOYMENT  
ORDER

REF: CARACAS 283

Classified By: Robert Downes, Political Counselor,  
for Reason 1.4(d)

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: Nearly 48 hours after Chavez ordered ten battalions to the Colombian border, there has been only small scale movements of troops or equipment from major combat units. Less than 12 light tanks or armored fighting vehicles have been seen preparing for movement at Carora in the western state of Lara and at Fuerte Mara in the border state of Zulia. Despite confident interviews by the commanding general in the local press, no units of the IV Armored Division - including the presumably highly mobile 42nd Parachute Brigade - have deployed. END SUMMARY.

Fuerte Mara, First to Fight?

¶2. (S) Fuerte Mara in Zulia is 55 kilometers from the Colombian border. Local press reported seeing six light tanks on flatbed trucks entering Fuerte Mara on the afternoon of March 3, followed by a convoy of soldiers in trucks a few hours later. Maracaibo contacts also reported OV-10 Bronco aircraft flying over the city. Other sources identified the armor as French AMX-13 light tanks. Fuerte Mara is home to the "Apure Braves" Armored Battalion, the 112 Mechanized Infantry Battalion and the 105 Engineering Battalion of the First Infantry Division.

Carora

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13. (S) The Carora barracks are 300 Km from the border in the western state of Lara. Sources report five French-made AMX-30 main battle tanks and accompanying cargo trucks were being made ready for transport. The front page of a Venezuelan tabloid showed two British-made Spartan Armored Fighting Vehicles (AFV) with "Lara" markings on a commercial trailer. (Note: Modern tanks and AFVs are trucked to the front, saving fuel as well as wear and tear on the vehicles treads. A shortage of Heavy Equipment Transporters (HET) in the Army will restrict their ability to move units quickly. End Note)

Other Units

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14. (S) According to the local press, units of Venezuela's IV Division in Valencia and Maracay have executed a recall order bringing troops in from leave. Although General Tineo Pena told the local press that "they are on alert" he said they were awaiting further orders. Other sources report about 30 tanks and AFVs are being prepared for movement. There has been no indication of movement at the 42nd Parachute Brigade.

15. (C) Comment: A lack of training, rehearsal and failure to invest in unglamorous military equipment like trailers and cargo planes has slowed the Venezuelan military's mobilization. This may explain the lack of patriotic visuals, from this otherwise propaganda savvy leader, of troops marching to the front. End Comment.

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=====CABLE ENDS=====